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AUTHOR	Hamner, Devon
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ABSTRACT

This project is designed to engage families in shared literacy activities. The K-2 students take turns taking home a book bag that includes a stuffed toy, a book, art supplies, a topic to discuss with their families, and a journal to share their thoughts and ideas. Through the experience they build positive memories of literacy activities. During the 5-7 minute daily lessons, students will: share a carefully chosen book with their families, reading it together; discuss the book and its journaling topic with their families; complete a journal entry with their families; and return the journal to share with the class. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A sample letter to parents, a list of suggested books, and a speaking and listening rubric are attached. (RS)

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Have Journal...Will Travel: Promoting Family Involvement in Literacy

ED 480 629

Author

Devon Hamner
Grand Island, Nebraska

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Grade Band

K-2

Estimated Lesson Time

5-7 minutes daily

Overview

Students take turns taking home a book bag that includes a stuffed toy, a book to read with their families, art supplies, a topic to discuss, and a journal to complete as a family. The students then return the bag the following day and share their entries with the class. After every student has taken the bag home, the journal is bound into a book for the classroom library. The teacher then selects a new topic and book to start a second rotation. The goal is to invite parents to join their children in these literacy activities.

From Theory to Practice

Fox, Mem. 1993. *Radical Reflections: Passionate Opinions on Teaching, Learning, and Living*. Harcourt Brace & Company.

> In her book *Radical Reflections*, Mem Fox states: "I'm certain that learning to read and learning to love reading owe a great deal (much more that we ever dreamed) to the nature of the human relationships that occur around and through books. If we could sneak into the homes of avid readers, I think we'd discover very often that the comfortable relationship between an older reader and a younger reader during the shared reading of a mutually loved book might be a key factor in the child's success." (136)
>
> She also says: "The relationship between parent and child during the stories is one of warmth and love, which makes the child associate books with warmth and love and pleasure and security. How attractive books become!" (100)
>
> Again she adds: "In practical terms I am advocating—with passion...the reading aloud of powerful literature in pursuit of the creation of powerful writers." (118)

This lesson encourages families to become more involved with their children's literacy development by participating in reading and literacy activities together.

Student Objectives

Students will

- share a carefully chosen book with their families, reading it together.
- discuss the book and its journaling topic with their families.

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- complete the journal entry with their families.
- return the journal to share with the class.

Resources

- Sample Letter to Parents
- List of Suggested Books
- Speaking and Listening Rubric
- Eric Carle Web Site
- Jan Brett Web Site
- Mem Fox Web Site
- Seussville Web Site

Instructional Plan

Preparation

- Choose your mascot.
  Each year I choose a different mascot for our class. Past choices included a koala bear that we called Koala Lou, a bunny named Peter Rabbit, a teddy bear named Timothy Bear, Sesame Street characters, and Blue from Blue's Clues. This year's choice is a cute little yellow duck named Ducky Lucky.
- Obtain supplies for the bag.
  After choosing your mascot, purchase the stuffed toy, book bag, and a journal with a clear plastic cover. Assemble colored pencils, crayons, neon crayons, markers, pencils and pens in a plastic bag. Three-hole punch paper for the journal entries and add to the journal.
- Choose your topic and book for the first rotation.
  After choosing the topic, carefully choose an engaging book for the families to share, plan your follow-up activity for them to discuss and write about in the journal. (I try to choose a book that fits the journal prompt; for example: "The Kissing Hand" when asking families to write about their child starting school.)
- Write your letter that will go in the front clear pocket of the journal.
  In your letter, introduce your mascot and the procedure for having this special friend come to their homes for an overnight visit.
- Choose how you will do your rotation: drawing names, alphabetical order, or some other order.

Instruction and Activities

1. Introduce your mascot and let him/her visit the classroom for a few days. Take him/her on a tour of the school, including attending music class, PE, etc.
2. After about a week, tell the students that your mascot would like to meet their families too and will be coming home to spend the night at their houses.
3. Carefully explain your procedure and expectations for the visit. Show them the bag and its contents. Set a tone of expectation for the visit, the book, and the journaling. Share your mascot's visit to your home and the fun you had. (I do the first journal entry with my family, using pictures and words to tell about our visit.) Continue this discussion for several days before starting the first rotation to be sure expectations are understood.
4. Choose a child to take the bag home first. Review the process for what to do at home with the

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book and journal,and when to return the bag.

5. When the child returns the bag the next day, be sure to let him/her tell about the experience and share his/her family journal entry. Clap for the child and his/her family! Let your mascot whisper to you about the fun they shared at the child's house.
6. Choose the next child to take home the bag.
7. Continue until every child has had a visit. Then bind the journal entries into a classroom book. Select a new topic, book, and journal project, add blank pages for the journal, write a new letter, and start again.

Topics I've used successfully

- How did you feel on your first day of school?
- What is a favorite memory that you have as a family? A special holiday? A vacation? A new baby? Write and tell us about it. Draw a picture to go with your story.
- What is a special tradition in your family? Do you celebrate a special holiday or does your family get together on a certain day for a special meal? Some traditions come down to us through our families and represent traditions from other countries or cultures. Sometimes a family starts a new tradition that is and will be special for them. Tell us about one of your family traditions and draw pictures or send photographs to help us learn about your tradition. Maybe some of the people from your family would like to come to school with you to help you tell about your special tradition!
- What is your favorite book? Write about what makes this book special to you. Bring it to school to show us!
- Each of us has a name. How did you get yours? Who chose your name? Write the special story of how you got your name. You may even want to bring a baby picture to show us.
- Pets: Some of you have a special pet that you can tell us about. Some of you may have a pet you would like someday. Write and tell us about it and draw or bring a picture of your pet or the pet you would like to have.
- Where is your favorite place to go? Is it a place you visited on vacation? Grandma's house? The library? School? Your own house? Write and tell us about your special place.
- What is your favorite season and what makes it special for you?
- What is your favorite memory of kindergarten?
- What was your very favorite thing about our year together? Parents, share a favorite memory of your own school days too!

Tips for Success

- Choose quality books that will appeal to children and parents. Your goal is to hook them on books!
- What about the child that forgets to return the bag? I call the parent to ask if they could bring it to school or make sure it is returned the next day.
- What about a lost book? Parents usually agree to replace it. Some can't, and I just go and buy another copy so the bag can continue its rotation. The important thing is that quality books are being shared and families are discussing the book and responding to it in the journal.
  The goal is to have this an inviting and rewarding time, and I don't want to interrupt that by waiting for a lost book to be returned or replaced.
- What do you do with a child whose family doesn't speak English? They respond in their home

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language, and I find a translator.

- What if no one helps the child at home and the journal entry isn't completed? I find out the reason why it was not completed. If the bag was left at daycare overnight or the family was too busy that night, I let the child have an extra day to complete it. If no one could help the child, we complete it together as a team of two, teacher and student, and share our journal entry with the class.
- What if the mascot gets dirty? I give the mascot a bath after each rotation—and occasionally Ducky Lucky comes home with me for a night during the rotation if he has been so loved that he ate and slept with the student and now needs a bath.
- What happens to the mascot at the end of the year? We hold a drawing, and one child gets to keep it forever. This mascot becomes part of our class, a living reality to the students, and he needs to stay with someone in this class with a new mascot chosen for the next class.

Web Resources

Mem Fox
http://www.memfox.net/
Visit Mem Fox and learn about this author and her books.

Eric Carle
http://www.eric-carle.com/
Visit Eric Carle and learn about his books.

Jan Brett
http://www.janbrett.com/
A visit with Jan Brett and a chance to learn about her books and related activities.

Seussville
http://www.seussville.com
Visit this site for fun with Dr. Seuss characters.

Student Assessment/Reflections

The students self-assess their ability to listen to the child sharing his/her journal entry when their role is listener, and self-assess their ability to share their ideas when it is their turn to return the bag and share their family's journal entry using the Speaking and Listening Rubric.

Your main feedback about the success of this project comes informally as children and families share their experiences and talk to you about how meaningful this has been to them. I have had wonderful responses from families, and years later a former student will recall how exciting it was to bring the bag home to share with his/her family.

NCTE/IRA Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2 - Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human

experience.

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5 - Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

7 - Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

9 - Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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read•write•think

International Reading Association NCTE marcopolo

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This letter introduces Ducky Lucky, our mascot for this year, to the children and their parents:

Dear Kindergarten Kids,

Meet Ducky Lucky, our new kindergarten friend! Ducky Lucky is so excited to be in our class, and best of all, he will get to come home with each of you about once a month to meet your families too. We will take turns getting to take home Ducky Lucky and his bag of fun. Each time he will be bringing something special for you and your family to do together.

Ducky Lucky came home with me last night. It took us a long time to choose what book to put in his bag. We must have read a dozen books before we chose this one just for you. Hope you like it! Ducky Lucky said it was his favorite because it was about starting school. We know that's exciting!

This book is called "The Kissing Hand" by Audrey Penn. It's about Chester, a little raccoon who is starting school for the first time. He's afraid that if he goes to school, he might miss his mom a whole lot. Maybe you felt like that too. Have someone in your family read this book to you to find out how Chester's mom helps him deal with his feelings.

Then in the journal you and your family can write about your first day of school. You may want to draw the pictures to tell how you were feeling while your family helps you write about your feelings. Mom and Dad can write to tell us how they felt too! Make sure you bring the bag, Ducky Lucky, the book, the journal, and the art supplies back to school tomorrow so you can share your journal entry with the class. We can hardly wait to hear you share about your first day of school!

When everyone in our class has had a chance to have Ducky Lucky come to visit them, we'll make our journal entries into a book for our classroom. You will all be authors!

Have fun with Ducky Lucky! Be sure to bring the bag back to school tomorrow!

Love,
Mrs. Hamner

Remember to match the book to the journal prompt. Each family will have the opportunity to read the same book. Be sure to choose a book that will engage children and also be appreciated by parents.

Examples of quality children's books that could be used in this project:

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

Mama, Do You Love Me? by Barbara M. Joosse

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault

Whoever You Are by Mem Fox

Koala Lou by Mem Fox

Me and My Family Tree by Joan Sweeney

I Like Me! by Nancy Carlson

Stellaluna by Janell Cannon

Clifford books by Norman Bridwell

Franklin books by Paulette Bourgeois

Eric Carle books

Dr. Seuss books

Jan Brett books

Listening Rubric

Yes!

- I was a good listener.

OK

- I tried to listen most of the time.

Not Yet

- I forgot to listen.

Speaking Rubric

Yes!

- I shared my ideas and showed my journal entry.
- I spoke loud enough for everyone to hear.
- I looked at my audience.

OK

- I shared some of my ideas and showed my journal entry.
- I had to be encouraged to speak loud enough to be heard.
- I had to be encouraged to look at my audience.

Not Yet:

- I showed my journal entry, but didn't share my ideas.
- I didn't speak loud enough to be heard.
- I didn't look at my audience.

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